

Just As I Am- August's Hymn of the Month 2022

**By
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The long hot days of summer and the study of hymn histories have caused me to wish my way back in time. I read about those days gone by; and in particular, the old fashioned camp meetings of the 1800's. There must have been something special in presenting the gospel in the outdoor air, with the fluttering of canvas overhead: to hear an old fashioned message on "hellfire and damnation," to hold on to your seat for fear of slipping into the abyss, and to finally respond as the altar call song was sung. Oh, just to have been there once would have thrilled my heart beyond belief.

When it comes to the subject of the altar call, probably no one song has been used more for that purpose than the one written in 1834 at Brighton, England. The author of the hymn, Charlotte Elliot, had been an invalid for most of her life. Now at the age of 46, she wanted to do something to help her minister/brother raise money for his new school. Everybody in town was doing something—everybody, that is, except for her. She could hardly get around her room. In the middle of a sleepless night, oppressed with a sense of helplessness, she wrote the formula of her faith in six terse stanzas. At first, it was published as a poem for sale, raising money for the benefit of St. Margaret's Hall, Brighton. As a matter of fact, the poem would bring in more reserve than all of the town's efforts combined.

Then, in 1849, the poem came to the attention of William B. Bradbury in New York City. Bradbury had been composing music for the Lord's work and now he would give Charlotte's poem wings to fly around the world, for the Lord had wonderful plans for this song because it described so pointedly how we first must come to the Savior.

With a cool breeze blowing under the canvas top, the night air surrounding the pleas of the evangelist and the singing of the final hymn, millions have stepped into the old sawdust trail and come to an old fashioned altar with the singing of the invalid's song:

**Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come! I come!**